In the Claims:

Please cancel claim 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 without prejudice.

Please amend claims 6-7, 10, and 17-18 as follows:

Claims 1-5 (canceled)

6. (currently amended) A method for implementing a pointer and stake model for frame alteration code ~~as recited in claim 1 includes the steps of~~ in a network processor comprising the steps of:

providing a current pointer and a stake for a packet selected for transmit;

maintaining said current pointer for tracking a current position for frame alteration operations in the packet;

maintaining said stake for tracking a start of a current header for frame alteration operations in the packet; and

providing an advance and set stake instruction at the end of a specified frame alteration sequence to advance said current pointer and said stake to the start of a next packet header.

7. (currently amended) A method for implementing a pointer and stake model for frame alteration code as recited in ~~claim 1~~ claim 6 includes the steps of utilizing hardware to set said current pointer and said stake to a start of a new packet selected for transmit.

Claims 8-9. (canceled)

10. (currently amended) Apparatus for implementing a pointer and stake model for frame alteration code ~~as recited in claim 8 includes~~ in a network processor comprising:

a current pointer maintained for tracking a current position for frame alteration operations in the packet;

a stake maintained for tracking a start of a current header for frame alteration operations in the packet;

said current pointer and said stake being set to a start of a packet selected for transmit;

advance pointer instructions for allowing said current pointer and said stake to be advanced an arbitrary number of bytes into the packet; and

an advance and set stake instruction for advancing said current pointer and said stake to a start of a next packet header.

Claims 11-16. (canceled)

17. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program product for implementing a pointer and stake model for frame alteration code ~~as recited in claim 12 includes the steps of~~ in a network processor system, said computer program product including a plurality of computer executable instructions stored on said computer-readable medium, wherein said instructions, when executed by the network processor system, cause the network processor system to perform the steps of:

providing a current pointer and a stake for a packet selected for transmit;

maintaining said current pointer for tracking a current position for frame alteration operations in the packet;

maintaining said stake for tracking a start of a current header for frame alteration operations in the packet; and

providing an advance and set stake instruction at the end of a specified frame alteration sequence to advance said current pointer and said stake to the start of a next packet header.

18. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program product for implementing a pointer and stake model for frame alteration code as recited in ~~claim 12~~ claim 17 includes the steps of utilizing hardware to set said current pointer and said stake to a start of a new packet selected for transmit.